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REFLEXIONS

ON THE

GROWTH of HEATHENISM

AMONG

MODERN CHRISTIANS.

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MODERN ISLAM

REFLEXIONS
ON THE
GROWTH of HEATHENISM
AMONG
MODERN CHRISTIANS:
IN A LETTER TO
A FRIEND AT OXFORD.

Humbly recommended to the serious Consideration
of all those who are entrusted with the EDUCATION
of YOUTH.

[Wm Jones of Nayland]

By a PRESBYTER of the CHURCH of ENGLAND.

Wm Jones

If the LORD be GOD, follow Him: but if BAAL,
follow him. 1 KINGS, xviii. 21.

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MDCCCLXXVI.

REFLECTIONS

ON THE

GROWTH OF HEATHENISM
ADVERTISEMENT.

AMONG

THE Reader may be shocked when he is told, that there is a disposition to Heathenism in an age of so much improvement, and pronounce the accusation improbable and visionary; but he is requested to weigh impartially the facts here offered, and then to form his judgment. The following Letter was intended only for the inspection of a friend; but if there is any tendency in the public to such a peculiar kind of corruption, as is here pointed out, they ought to have some warning of it; and therefore it has been judged that the present publication can be neither impertinent nor unseasonable.



REFLEXIONS, &c.

DEAR SIR,

A Worthy gentleman, who is a collector of things rare and curious in their several kinds, shewed me a large shoeing-horn, which as tradition reports had been the property of an ancient abbot of *St. Edmund's Bury*. This relic of antiquity is very handsomely engraved with figures representing the seven works of charity, which are, the giving of bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, cloaths to the naked, lodging to strangers, visiting the sick, and prisoners, and burying the dead. On this my learned friend took occasion to remark, that in the ages before the Reformation, the subjects of the ornamental arts, which are now so universally taken from the Heathen Mythology,

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thology, were then generally borrowed from the Holy Scripture, and had some pious relation to the doctrines of Christianity. Of this he shewed me another remarkable instance in the powder-horn of King Henry VIII. which is adorned with the history of St. Stephen's martyrdom, in elegant figures of ivory. Whereas, had an artist of this age been set to invent a device for a powder-horn, his imagination would immediately have suggested to him the fall of *Phaeton*, the *Cyclops* forging thunderbolts, or some like allusion to the history and effects of fire from the stores of the Heathen Mythology.

I shall not stop here to dispute which of these two sources, Paganism or Christianity, will furnish the best subjects for poets, painters, and sculptors to work upon : but I cannot help observing, that the general state of religion and manners may be judged of by the style and taste adopted in the ornamental arts. There
might

might be a faulty superstition, with a mixture of simplicity bordering upon ignorance, in the works of former ages; but the style of them shewed that Christianity was the religion of the country, and that the several particulars of the sacred history were then held in honour, as the subjects most worthy to be offered for admiration, and recommended by all the efforts of human ingenuity.

This was certainly the persuasion of those times: but in the present age the public taste can seldom find any thing but Heathen matter to work upon: from which it is natural to infer that Heathenism is in better repute than formerly; and thence it will follow, that the public regard to Christianity, and all that relates to it, is proportionably declined.

Polydore Virgil, in his work *De rerum inventoribus*, tells us how in the middle ages of the church, they christened the ceremonies of the Pagan superstition, and adapted their fables to the mysteries of

the Christian worship : which observation will undoubtedly account for much of the pomp that appears in the celebrities of the modern church of Rome. There might possibly be a very good intention in thus attempting to reclaim what had been misapplied, in order to make an impression upon vulgar minds in their own way ; but there was often great weakness and want of judgment in the manner, which should never be proposed for imitation. Thus much of their humour ought to be retained, that the true religion should, in all places and on all occasions, be seen to preserve its superiority over the false ; not merely because one is better than the other, but because the one is worthy of God, and will raise honourable sentiments in men, while the other was never intended for any thing but an engine of the devil, to infuse sentiments of impurity, obscenity, pride, and vanity, dishonourable to God, and destructive to man. Yet the taste for Hea-
then

then learning, which began to prevail about the times of the Reformation hath been productive of an evil, which hath been growing upon us for two hundred years past, and hath at length given to Heathenism the upper hand in almost every subject. The fabulous objects of the Grecian mythology have even got possession of our churches; in one of which I have seen a monument, with elegant figures as large as the life, of the three Fates, *Clotho*, *Lachesis*, and *Atropos*, spinning and clipping the thread of a great man's life: by which species of memorial, he is taken as it were out of the hands of the true God, whom we Christians worship in our churches, and turned over to the miserable blindness of Heathen Destiny: not to mention the insult and profanation with which Heathen idols are brought into a Christian temple. In the same church, the baptistery or font is removed almost out of sight; and when found, has a very mean and unworthy

thy appearance, as if it were intended for some other use: so natural is it for those improvements which exalt Heathenism to debase Christianity. How conspicuous are all the temples of the Heathen idols in the famous gardens of *Stowe* in *Buckinghamshire*; while the parish church, which happens to stand within the precincts, is industriously shrouded behind evergreens and other trees, as an object impertinent, or at least of no importance to a spectator of modern taste. In our rural ornaments we have temples to all the pagan divinities; and in the city a *Pantheon*, wherein there is a general assembly of the sons and daughters of pleasure, under the auspices of the whole tribe of Heathen dæmons.

This taste is not only profane and corrupting whenever it takes place, but the productions of it are sometimes monstrously absurd and incongruous: it begets a certain inattention to propriety, which admits of false and shocking associations,

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consistent neither with goodness of taste nor correctness of judgment. When I see the figure of a cock upon the top of a steeple, I am reminded of that sacred bird who was a monitor to *St. Peter*, and through his example is now giving a daily lesson to all believers. When I see the globe and cross on the top of *St. Paul's*, I rejoice in the exaltation of him who was humbled for our sakes, but is now the head of all principality and power, to the church and to the world; and I feel a secret satisfaction in reflecting, that a cross so exalted has no reproach in it, as if the offence of it were ceased. But when I see the dragon upon Bow-steeple, I can only wonder how an emblem so expressive of the devil, and frequently introduced as such into the temples of idolaters, found its way to the summit of a Christian edifice. I am so jealous in these matters, that I must confess myself to have been much hurt by a like impropriety in a well-known music-room, where there is
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an organ consecrated by a superscription TO APOLLO, although the praises of *Jehovah* are generally celebrated by it once every month in the choral performances : and it seems rather hard that *Jehovah* should condescend to be a borrower, while *Apollo* is the proprietor.

In all the sciences the tokens of this Pagan infection are very observable. In politics we hear of nothing but *Brutus*, and are stunned with the heroism of rebels, and the virtue of regicides. In morality, how venerable are the characters of *Socrates*, and *Cato* the suicide : while the *Spartan* virtue is become the grand object of patriotic emulation ; though I am sure it would make a shocking figure if the moral character of that commonwealth were impartially represented on the authority of *Plutarch*. Botany, which in ancient times was full of the blessed Virgin *Mary*, and had many religious memorials affixed to it, is now as full of the Heathen *Venus*, the *Mary* of
our

our modern virtuosi. Amongst the ancient names of plants, we find the *Calceolus Mariæ*, *Carduus Mariæ*, *Carduus benedictus*, our Lady's Slipper, our Lady's Thistle; our Lady's Mantle, the *Alchymilla*, &c. but modern improvements have introduced the *Speculum Veneris*, *Labrum Veneris*, Venus's Looking-glass, Venus's Basin (the *Dipsacus*), Venus's Navel-wort, Venus's Fly-trap, and such like: and whereas the ancient botanists took a pleasure in honouring the memory of the Christian saints, with their *St. John's* wort, *St. Peter's* wort, herb *Gerard*, herb *Christopher*, and many others; the modern ones, more affected to their own honour, have dedicated several newly-discovered genera of plants to one another; of which the *Hottonia*, the *Sibthorpia*, are instances, with others so numerous and familiar to men of science, that they need not be specified.

But in poetry, the servility of Christians is most notorious of all. Here they fol-

low as implicitly as if the Heathen Muses had deprived them of their wits. If any machinery is to be introduced, it must all be according to the Heathen model, by a law as invariable as that of the *Medes* and *Persians*. But it should be considered, that when an Heathen poet made use of his divine machinery, he only spoke as he believed, introducing such powers into his verse as he professed to worship in prose. After he had been offering sacrifices in the temple of *Minerva*, it was natural for him to bring her in to the assistance of his hero : but when a Christian moralist does the same, proposing a pattern of virtue on the Heathen plan for the purposes of education, he goes out of his way, to adopt what he knows to be as absurd in itself as it is contrary to his profession. If there is a natural opposition between truth and falsehood, we are now as irrational in betraying a partiality to the profane objects of Heathenism, as the Heathens themselves would have been,

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had they shewn the like regard to the sacred objects of the Bible; only with this difference, that they would have taken up what was better than their own, whereas we incline to that which is worse: their choice would have brought them nearer to God; ours brings us nearer to the Devil. How strange would it have been, if while their temples were dedicated to *Venus*, *Mars*, and *Bacchus*, their gardens had been adorned with statues of *Moses* and *Aaron*, the walls of their houses painted with the destruction of *Sodom*, the overthrow of *Pharoah*, the delivery of the Two Tables on Mount *Sinai*, and such like subjects of Sacred History! Who would not have inferred in such a case, that their temples were frequented out of form, while their inclinations were toward the law of *Moses*, and the God of the Hebrews? The Heathen priests would never have been silent on such an occasion: they would have exclaimed against this double-faced disaffection, and have given

the alarm against all that were guilty of it, as persons ready to apostatize from the religion of their ancestors. But alas! no Heathens were ever found to be thus inconsistent: they were faithful to their profession, and with one mind abominated every thing that was Jewish, for the relation it bore to the Jewish worship; always railing against that nation as low and contemptible, and their religion as foolish and superstitious. We also should be as sincere in our profession as they were in theirs, and should express our aversion against folly and profaneness wherever they occur, unless our intellects were vitiated with false wisdom from the common forms of education. To take little things for great, and great for little, is the worst misfortune that can befall the human understanding. The machinery of Heathenism appears great to scholars, because it has been described by great wits of antiquity, with great words and musical verses; and being offered very
early

early to the mind at school, there is a natural prepossession in favour of it. But is there really any thing great in the character of *Æolus*, shutting up the winds in a den? In *Vulcan* the blacksmith, hammering thunderbolts with his one-eyed journeymen? In *Neptune*, a man living under water like a fish, and flourishing a pitch-fork to still the raging of the sea? If these things are taken literally, according to that poetical character in which the ancient writers used them, and in which only they are adopted by the moderns, they are so mean and ridiculous, that when the Heathens were pressed with them after the commencement of the Gospel, they could find no way of upholding their dignity but by resolving them into their physical character; that is, by accommodating them to the powers and operations of nature, to which they alluded with a sort of mystical resemblance*.

Notwithstanding all this, such is the at-

* This is done at large by *Phurnatus*, in his book *Περὶ Θεῶν φυσικῶς*, published in *Gale's Opuscula Mythologica*.

tachment to the Heathen models, that *Boileau* lays it down as a principle in epic poetry, that no grandeur of description can be attained without introducing Jupiter, Juno, Pallas, Neptune, with the whole tribe of Pagan divinities; and if any Christian should be deterred by a sense of his profession from making use of these ancient ornaments, as he calls them, his scruples can be ascribed to nothing but a vain and superstitious fear. And indeed our poets have generally assented to this doctrine of *Boileau*, without finding themselves much embarrassed by the terrors of Christian superstition; insomuch that if any stranger were to judge of our religion from the practice of our poets and tragedians, he would take Paganism for the established religion of the country. For besides hymns to Venus and Bacchus, and Wood Nymphs, and Water Nymphs*,

* The last thing that occurred to me of this kind, was, a prayer of poor *Phyllis Wheatley*, the negro poetess, to *Neptune*, entreating his providence to preserve her friend in a voyage.

we see virtues and attributes impersonated and deified as they were of old : we have odes to Liberty, odes to Health, odes to Contentment ; in which Health is prayed to for health, and Contentment is entreated to give contentment, that is, to be the cause of itself; with many other absurdities, in which the licence of poetry is not very consistent with common sense, and much less with the sense of religion.

What is more common with poets than to make a compliment of the creation to Jupiter ? and consequently of all those sovereign attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness, which are displayed in the works of nature ; especially in the formation of the human species ? Of this we have a specimen in the following lines by the late celebrated Dean of St. Patrick's.

*When Cupid did his grandsire Jove entreat
To form some beauty by a new receipt :*

* * * * *

*Jove mixt up all, and his best clay employ'd,
Then call'd the happy composition Floyd.*

If a Latin poet celebrates the nativity and genius of some learned man, *Lucina* presides at his birth, and brings him safely into the world ; the *Muses* are his nurses, *Minerva* teaches him, and *Phæbus* inspires him. When his death is to be lamented, what can his surviving friend say for him, on poetical principles, but wish himself *Orpheus*, that so with his lyre he might go down to Hell, and prevail on *Pluto* (the keeper of all dead Christians *) to restore him back again ?

* The public has been informed, that a procession after the mode of the Heathen funeral rites, was lately celebrated with great pomp, instead of Christian burial : in which procession, the heart of a dead Christian was carried through the Elysian Fields to soft music, and placed with proper solemnity in a very conspicuous Mausoleum. Some years ago, a Bacchanalian festival was celebrated, and sacred rites performed before the idol of Bacchus, at the same place ; the particulars of which are preserved in some public prints of that time.

This

This is the poor trite stuff, which hath now been repeated for some ages past : the Heathen Deities have been the objects of poetical gratitude, and the Heathen fables the sources of poetical consolation ! Such poets must excuse me, if I remind them of their error in words like those of the Apostle, “ O foolish Christians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should return to these beggarly elements, before whom Jesus Christ hath been set forth, as alive from the dead ? Having begun in Christianity, are ye to be made perfect by Heathenism ? Have ye suffered so many persecutions, and are ye now going back to those idols, for whose sakes ye were appointed as sheep to the slaughter ? The folly which returned from the freedom of the Gospel back to the bondage of the law, was nothing when compared to that which trifles with Omnipotence, and gives to idols and devils the honour due only to the true God.”

For the origin of poetry, *Boileau*, the French critic, can go no higher than to the Heathen Oracles :

*These miracles from numbers did arise,
Since which in verse Heaven taught his mysteries ;
And by a priest possess'd with rage divine,
Apollo spoke from his prophetic shrine.*

Dryden's Transl.

How serious is this! One would think Apollo had written the Bible ; or at least that the oracular verses of Heathen diviners were prior to the sacred songs of the Scripture, and of equal authority. But when great wits are transported into the fabulous regions of poetry, they become insensible of the wickedness of diabolical imposture (for such was the practice at the shrines of Apollo) and forget what they owe to truth, reason, and revelation.

I think *Milton* hath made it appear, that what is great in poetry may well be attain-

attained without borrowing any thing from the *ancient ornaments* of the Pagan machinery : and indeed his poem of *Paradise Lost* never sinks below itself more effectually, than when he condescends to treat his subject in the Heathen phrase, and embellish it with Heathen allusions, as where *Adam* and *Eve* are compared to *Jupiter* and *Juno** ; which is so foreign and unnatural, that the imagination being shocked with the impropriety, becomes incredulous, and then the pleasure of reading is lost. Perhaps it may be imputed to the formality of Puritanism, that his poem was not still more deformed with the impertinent ornaments of profane literature. In that age, the religion and morality of the classical writers, had not obtained quite so much authority as afterwards, when they were called in to give their sanction to Heresy, and to corrupt the highest mysteries of the Christian

* Book iv. 499.

faith. Then was the pernicious example of *Cato* set up, who hath been followed ever since as a pattern of suicide, because the sin was unfortunately varnished over by the sentiments and diction of that elegant and eminent scholar Mr. *Addison*; who spoke of *treading on classical ground* with that veneration, with which the palmers and pilgrims of the twelfth century visited the Holy Land, which had been the scene of our blessed Saviour's miracles.

Who does not know, that Heathen fragments are now sought after as zealously as Christian relics were collected in former ages? There was a time when all the curious people of this nation were alarmed and animated if the bones of some ancient hermit were found, or some treatise recovered and added to the works of a legendary writer. Now the like alarm is spread, if an Etruscan vault is opened, and some old broken pitchers are brought to light, with grotesque ill-designed

signed figures upon them. When some great men, famous for their parts and learning, have distinguished themselves by a taste for Heathen principles and Heathen curiosities, the whole tribe of inferiors follows them of course, as the vulgar on all other occasions submit readily to fashion, the common rule of those who have no judgment. That the study of antiquity is not entertaining and curious, I do not mean to say; neither would I suggest that it is without its use; for certainly it is both useful and reputable to know many things which it is not necessary to admire: but some minds are so ill prepared to make proper distinctions, that their curiosity rises insensibly to a religious veneration, too often attended with a disaffection toward every thing that relates to the Christian character.

It is much to be lamented, that while we are learning from the scholars of profane antiquity, the beauties of Imagery, the graces of Diction, the arts of Oratory,

tory, and the harmony of Poetry, we are not better upon our guard against their principles, which steal upon us through the vehicles of Poetry and Oratory, till our taste is wholly vitiated, and the glorious realities of the Christian revelation become insipid and insignificant.

Experience shews how difficult it is to dwell with delight upon the expressions of Heathen writers, without embracing too many of their sentiments. When a painter hath exhibited *Thais* with all her charms, he that values the lines of the picture, and admires the skill of the master, may very possibly be tempted to lust after the original, though he is apprized before-hand that she is an infamous and abandoned strumpet.

Dr. *Middleton* confesses in one of his letters, that his classical engagements had rendered him very squeamish in his theological studies; and I am well convinced this has been the case with many others, who from having their brains filled with

Hea-

Heathen notions, and their affections touched with the vanity of conscious erudition, have contracted a nausea toward the Bible and its contents, first disrelishing and at length deliberately opposing the Christian doctrines, perhaps without being sensible how their minds were originally debauched. If this experiment is fatal in so many instances, and dangerous in all, it is an alarming consideration that the first ideas conceived by school-boys are for the most part of the Heathen stamp: and I fear they are too seldom instructed in due season concerning the infinite difference between the true God and the false *. I was told once by a school-boy, that one of his companions asked him very seriously, which

* This caution hath been laudably observed by the judicious editor of the *Selectæ e profanis Scripturis Historiæ*, who hath prefaced his collection with such admonitions and distinctions as would render the present strictures superfluous, if they were more generally attended to.

was the uppermost, *Jupiter* or *God Almighty*? And well might the poor child be ignorant of the distinction, when his elders, who ought to have had more judgment, have made some foul mistakes in the same way; such as that in the *Universal Prayer* of *Mr. Pope*, which gives us a new sort of levelling Theology, unknown to the wisdom of former ages. When the Jewish nation was called out by the prophet *Elijah* to be spectators of the grandest dispute the world ever saw, that is, to determine whether *Jehovah* or *Baal* was the proper object of religious adoration, *Mr. Pope* could have settled it all in a word or two, only by instructing the parties that the true God is worshipped in every climate by those who worship any God at all: that the *Saint*, the *Savage*, and the *Sage*, the Hebrew, the Hottentot, and the Greek philosopher, were the votaries of one and the same Divinity. How mistaken were the poor Christians under all the Roman persecu-

tions,

tions, in throwing away their lives upon a distinction which had no existence. They were brought before the altar of *Jupiter*, and the usual alternative was proposed, either to suffer death or signify their adoration. Had either party been aware of the new levelling principle, they might have been reconciled without proceeding to these extremities, and have joined amicably in the same sacrifices. Thus much however we may conclude for certain, that if the poet had been in the like circumstances, he could not possibly have been a martyr, if he believed his own doctrine.

The pious and excellent author of the *Night Thoughts*, who writes as a Christian moralist, hath been tempted by the force of custom to transgress that rule of sound criticism, which obliges us to make every composition uniform and of a piece. What occasion had he thus to adopt the Heathen style "*that more than miracle the Gods*

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"indulge*." Why *Gods* in the plural? Why must they have the honour of working miracles? And why are the Holy Angels of God, and the red-faced *Bacchus* of Paganism, brought together into the same poem? Which, to say nothing of the impiety of it, can never be reconciled to the rules of propriety and good writing. If we write as Christians, let us keep up to the style of our profession: if our scene is laid upon Heathen ground, then let us take the language of the Heathen writers—*Sit quod vis simplex duntaxat & unum*. The Levitical law forbade the people to plough with an ox and an ass together; and the New Testament taking up the same principle, commands us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. All I contend for here, is consistency and propriety; and I am sure the judgment of the best critics will bear me out in what I have said.

* Night IIId.

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The case of the primitive martyrs, who chose rather to die than do honour to the Heathen Deities, brings to my remembrance a circumstance which lessens my admiration of those antique statues, which, as the productions of genius, are otherwise very much to be admired for elegance of design and truth of proportion. In times of persecution it was the custom with the bigots of Heathenism to drag the Christians up to the images of their Idol-Gods, either to offer sacrifice or be put to death : whence it is by no means improbable, that the blood of many innocent Christians may have been barbarously shed to the honour of some statues now in high esteem with modern virtuosi of the same Christian profession ; who, for a little excellence of workmanship, admire and respect what their purer predecessors had reason to regard with horror and detestation.

Where at last will this taste, which hath been prevailing and increasing for so

many years, from the days of lord Herbert to the late erection of the *Pantheon*, where, I say, will it lead us? Where can it lead us, but to indifference and atheism? A Christian corrupted with Heathen affections, degenerates into something worse than the original Heathens of antiquity. They had great faith in such Gods as they knew, depended upon them devoutly, and applied to them on every public occasion, either of deprecation or thanksgiving. If we except the *Epicureans*, they insisted almost universally on a special providence, directing things *pro re nata*, and were assured that the Gods were the avengers of perjury and impiety. But faith in the divine protection, and fear of divine vengeance are but coldly regarded and rarely to be met with in many of their modern disciples. Sacrifice was practised by them, as the essential part of religion, for the expiation of private or national guilt: but when the Christian sacrifice is neglected, and the Heathen sacrifices

crifices are exploded, nothing remains but a religion without expiation; a thing which never existed since the expulsion of Adam from Paradise, till it was begotten of late times in *Socinus*, and his followers, when Christian lukewarmness engendered with the pride and ignorance of gentile philosophy.

While we have been considering the case of poets, orators, and artists, how they all stand affected, to Heathenism; I had almost forgotten the philosophers, I mean the natural philosophers, whose science for an hundred years past, hath been claiming kindred with the Heathen divinity. About the year 1680, it was observed by an eminent scholar of that time, that the exact and scrutinizing spirit of the school-divinity was become necessary, in order to detect the pretensions of some " who were ready by the study
" of nature to immerse God in matter,
" and with those impieties of *Democritus*
" and *Epicurus*, to confound him with
" na-

"nature." In the year 1685 Mr. Boyle,
 in a treatise intitled, *A free Inquiry into*
the vulgarly received notion of Nature, ex-
 pressed an apprehension that the same
 doctrine was likely to gain ground a-
 mongst us ; and he gave the alarm to the
 public in the following emphatic lan-
 guage, which merits well to be consider-
 ed. "Nor are Christians themselves so
 "much out of danger of being seduced
 "by these Heathenish notions about an
 "intelligent world (the stoical *anima*
 "*mundi*), but that even in these times
 "there is lately sprung up a sect of men,
 "as well professing Christianity as pre-
 "tending to philosophy ; who, (if I be
 "not misinformed of their doctrine) do
 "very much symbolize with the ancient
 "Heathens, and talk much indeed of
 "God, but mean such a one as is not
 "really distinct from the animated and
 "intelligent universe ; but is on that ac-
 "count very differing from the true God
 "whom we Christians believe and wor-
 "ship.

“ ship. And though I find the leaders
 “ of this sect to be looked upon by some
 “ more witty than knowing men, as the
 “ discoverers of unheard-of mysteries
 “ in physics and natural theology, yet
 “ their hypothesis does not at all appear
 “ to me to be new, &c.” Then he pro-
 ceeds to shew, that this philosophical God
 which is not essentially different from
Nature was the Deity of the Heathen
 Philosophers, citing such passages as
 that of *Seneca*, *Nihil natura sine Deo est,*
nec Deus sine natura, sed IDEM est uterque.

How near the expressions of our Doctor
Halley approach to an avowal of this Hea-
 then opinion in his eulogium on the New-
 tonian philosophy, let any impartial per-
 son judge, when he has considered the
 sense of them. And here let me observe
 by the way, that it is to no purpose for
 any man to give himself airs, and tell us
 that these things are popular, and must
 not be spoken against: they ought to be
 spoken against for that very reason, be-
 cause

cause the whole world does not afford a greater temptation to error than long established popularity ; on which consideration, all men who wish to chain down others to their own favourite errors, are for ever ringing this popularity in their ears. To go on therefore with Doctor *Halley*, whose sentiments concerning God and Nature, are communicated in the following lines :

*En tibi norma poli, & divæ libramina Molis,
Computus en Jovis, et quas dum primordia
rerum
Conderet, omnipotens sibi leges ipse Creator
Dixerit*————

Here the *Moles*, or mass of matter which constitutes the world, has the epithet *diva* ascribed to it, which makes it *divine* : and in another part of the same poem the epithet is given to Nature,

—————jamque abdita DIÆ
Clausis patent NATURÆ—————

Then the *computus Jovis*, or calculation of Jupiter, supposing it to allude to the
motions.

motions of the heavenly bodies, must imply that the visible world is *Jupiter*, as it stands in the Heathen Poet—*Jupiter est quodcunque vides*: and this seems farther evident from the sentiment which is explanatory of it, viz. that the *Creator* (supposing *Jupiter* to be he) gave *laws to himself*; which is true if God and Nature are the same thing; because in that case the laws given to Nature, will be laws imposed upon God. The Psalmist, who distinguishes rightly between the works and the workmaster, says, “ he gave *them* “ a law which shall not be broken :” and Mr. *Boyle*, in his treatise above referred to, hath well remarked, that “ God when “ he made the world, and established the “ laws of motion, gave them to *Matter*, “ and *not to Himself* *;” as if he had been censuring that expression of Dr. *Halley*, which has been the subject of our present animadversion.

If any other Philosophers have been

* Edit. 1685 p. 158.

betrayed by the authority of great names, into the belief of this strange doctrine, it cannot be wondered at, if such are found but badly disposed for the reception of the Christian mysteries: for what concord hath the Heathen *Jupiter* with the *Christian Trinity*? What arguments can be strong enough to persuade those men of a divine co-equal personality in the Godhead, who have relapsed into the reveries of Stoicism, and are the votaries of an *anima mundi*, an intelligent universe, a Deity immersed in matter? To such, the notion of a co-eternal Son of God, Creator of all things that exist, and who shall be still the same when nature shall wax old, and the heavens shall vanish away, must of necessity be contemptible and incredible: and this I apprehend to be one reason why we have so many Arians among the professed admirers of natural philosophy.

Let it not be said that I take any pleasure in censuring: a captious censor is an odious character. If the question should
be

be put to me, *who made thee a ruler and a judge ?* I am ready to answer for myself, that I shall never wish to rule where so few are inclined to obey, and that I shall never judge where my duty will permit me to excuse. I see my country hastening to ruin on many different principles ; and I point out one of them, which is the most pernicious of all, if it is not in fact the mother of all the rest. I only say what must be said by somebody, if we are ever to be reclaimed from the perilous consequences of Pagan corruption : if not, *liberavi animam meam*. Should any person ask me how Christianity is to be banished out of Christendom, as the predictions of the Gospel give us reason to expect it will be, I should make no scruple to answer, that it will certainly be brought to pass by this growing affection to Heathenism. And therefore it is devoutly to be wished that some censor would arise with the zeal and spirit of *Martin Luther*, to remonstrate effectually against this indulgence of Paganism, which is more fatal to the interests

rests of Christianity than all the abuses purged away at the Reformation. This is now the grand abuse, against which the zeal of a *Luther*, and the wit of an *Erasmus*, ought to be directed: it is the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not, even in the sanctuary of Christianity, and is a worse offence than all the profanations that ever happened to the Jewish temple. In the mean time, till the world shall be blessed with such a monitor, I have presumed to claim some freedom of thought, and liberty of speech, against the tyranny of prevailing fashion: and you will pardon me if I confess to you, upon this occasion, the mean opinion I have long entertained of some modern refinements; insomuch that I could wish many of them were exchanged for a little of that religious simplicity, which placed the seven works of charity upon the shoeing horn of the Abbot of *St. Edmund's Bury*.

I am, Dear Sir,

Your's most faithfully,

And affectionately,

